

INFORMATION REPORT

CD NO.

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COUNTRY Venezuela

DATE DISTR. 11 APR 1949

SUBJECT Personal Opinions of Lt. Col. Roberto Casanova

NO. OF PAGES 2

PLACE 25X1A6a

ACQUIRED [REDACTED]

NO. OF ENCLS.
(LISTED BELOW)

DATE OF INFO

SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.

25X1X6

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1. Lt. Col. Roberto Casanova, Commander of the Maracaibo area, stated that he did not hold to his determination to fire upon recalcitrant workers in the Cabimas area during their walkout of 23 February as he had been asked to be lenient by the oil companies. Casanova feels that the companies are too tolerant and that the situation in the Cabimas area can be resolved only after a few lives have been taken. He stated that the Army is continually arresting labor leaders and agitators but as over 80 per cent of the workers in the Cabimas-Tia Juana area are Accion Democratica members, new groups spring up after each arrest.
2. Casanova has put a plan of operation into effect by which laid off skilled oil workers and laborers from the east, principally from the States of Monagas and Anzoategui, are transferred into his area to replace local suspect elements and to create a more stable situation there. His plan calls for large-scale dismissals and the expulsion from the State of Zulia of discharged workers. He added that he was submitting a request to the companies for an estimate of the number of replacements they might require. The result of sending discharged workers out of the district is that areas such as Dabajura and Camarebo, heretofore more or less quiet as far as labor disturbances were concerned, are now reporting Accion Democratica political agitation and subversive propaganda by former oil workers passing through en route to other sections of the country.
3. In discussing the proposed taxi drivers' strike* scheduled in the Cabimas area for 15 March, Casanova stated he intended to suspend indefinitely the driving licenses of all who go on strike for purely political reasons. He explained that he considers this strike clearly political in character.
4. In discussing the Military Junta, Casanova stated that in view of the present subversive political activity he did not look for any immediate change in the Junta or in the status of its members. He said that while Lt. Col. Marcos Perez Jimenez, Minister of National Defense, is the real power in the Junta, he is no diplomat or politician. He is first, last, and always a soldier, and his aspirations are purely military. He is, therefore, content to remain in second place in order to avoid the social and diplomatic demands of state protocol. Lt. Col. Carlos Delgado Chalbaud is, on the other hand, the suave diplomat and politician. Casanova further stated that he should soon know more about the situation of the Junta as he was going to Caracas on 16 March, the local labor situation permitting.

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Next Review Date: 2008

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~~Comment.~~ The chauffeurs' strike was postponed in order to have it coincide with the next oil workers' strike in the Cabimas area.

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